



PACIFIC (/INTERNATIONAL/PACIFIC-NEWS).

Covid cases surge among Pacific Islanders in Utah

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There has been an upswing in Covid-19 infections among Pacific Islanders in the American state of Utah.



Salt Lake City, Utah Photo: Flickr- CountyLemonade- . (cc-by-2.0.)

The state is home to the largest Pacific Island community on the United States mainland - it is made up mostly of Polynesians but also includes a significant number of Micronesians.

As of the middle of this week there have been 1248 Pacific Islanders in Utah reported as affected by the virus, a rate 2.5 times higher than the state average.

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Of those cases, 170 have come in the past week with 20 people hospitalised. Thirteen Pacific Islanders have died of Covid-19 in Utah to date.

Figures from Salt Lake County are the worst, with Pacific Islanders residing there nearly four times more likely to contract Covid-19 compared with the rest of Utah.

As *RNZ Pacific* has reported previously, the smaller Marshallese community in northwest Arkansas is even worse hit (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/420744/coronavirus-perfect-storm-engulfs-marshall-islanders-in-us>) by the virus with more than 30 people dying there.

A Salt Lake City-based nephrologist Dr Kalani Raphael said there were underlying chronic medical issues (<https://www.sltrib.com/news/2020/06/29/utahs-pacific-islanders/>) rife among the population of Pacific Islanders in Utah that left them vulnerable to the coronavirus.

He added that the Pacific community faces cultural and other barriers in accessing health care.

Meanwhile, the Utah Pacific Islander Health Coalition has established a Covid -19 resource site (<https://www.upihc.org/covid-19>) with clear and useful information for Pasifika communities affected by the pandemic.